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# THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY

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The dullness of vacation was illumined during the latter part of July and the first part of August by a series of discussions in the New York Times Saturday Review of Books on the subject of Latin as a universal language.

The Esperantists have been making a determined effort during the last year to draw attention to their hobby, and defenders of the new speech have been ready to appear before all gatherings. In despite of their zeal Esperanto bids fair to follow before very long the path of Volapük and other similar attempts into oblivion. But the claims of the Esperantists have had the good effect of drawing attention to the possibilities of Latin as a universal language. The cudgels for Latin were taken up and wielded very effectively by Arcadius Avellanus in the Times Review for August 15, following a previous communication on August 1, and replying to various other criticisms and objections both before and after his first article. Still later, in the Evening Post for October 10, he returns to the charge in a long and very interesting communication.

Arcadius Avellanus needs no introduction to teachers of Latin in this country. We remember the *Praeco Latinus* and other books edited by him with lively interest and gratitude for teaching those of us who were still without knowledge that spoken Latin is not as difficult as many of our university professors seem to regard it. Mr. Avellanus draws attention to the fact that Latin is the medium of communication of a large number of people already, that it furnishes ninety per cent. of the vocabulary of the Romance languages and a very large proportion of the vocabulary of English, German and Slavic. He also lays emphasis on the fact that the method of formation of Latin words is distinctly easy and well-known and that the addition of modern terms to the Latin vocabulary is not only not sacrilege but is demanded by the conditions of Latin linguistic history. Pedantry may have checked neo-Latin words but it is only pedantry that will. Of course, the formation of new words can be carried to an extreme and perhaps we would not all agree with the taste of *boycottissimus* although it appears in the preface of one of the most erudite of the Teubner texts, but such new words as were referred to by Dr. Rouse in his letters to the London Journal of Education cited in *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY*, I. 193, certainly are indications merely of a healthy growth.

The contention, then, that Latin could be used without difficulty as a universal language is not really so far-fetched as most people imagine. It is certainly not true that Latin is dead although it is just as certainly true that the professors of Latin are doing their best to kill it. We may admit without reserve that practice and continual practice is needed to produce any fluency in speaking any language, but surely we give enough time to the teaching of Latin in our public schools to attain that result. Bear in mind that more time is given to Latin than to any modern language—in many cases double the time. It, therefore, stands to reason that unless Latin is a language much more difficult of acquisition than German or French some facility in using it ought to be gained during this study. But the barbarians of the ancient world seem to have had little difficulty in acquiring Latin; in fact the whole history of modern languages shows the tremendous influence that Latin exerted in the most remote quarters of the earth. Why then should we give up without a struggle what has been proved to be not so difficult to acquire? It is true that the ancient barbarians learned their Latin by the direct method. Why not then employ the direct method ourselves more than we do? Those who have tried it speak with no uncertain sound as to its success. The answer will be made at once, "We have no teachers", and it is a just retort, but whether is it better to spend a year of graduate study in a university upon the technical details of textual criticism or upon the acquisition of a reading and speaking knowledge of the tongue? If the student is going to teach which will be of more value to him? If he is going to read the Latin language which will be of more value to him? If he is going to pay attention to English study which will be of more value to him? I do not mean to disparage utterly attention to textual criticism. This, too, "ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone". The fact that practically none of our college instructors handle Latin as a living tongue may be an explanation but it is certainly no excuse for our conditions. The Latin authors still make their appeal to the world; but not to the graduate students of Latin—more's the pity!

Greek has also been suggested as a universal language and its claims are urged in an article in the *Medical Record* (New York) for August 15, quoted

in the Literary Digest for September 5. Avellanus disposes of these claims in the Evening Post article and as compared with those of Latin they seem to have no particular justification. G. L.

### PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING LATIN<sup>1</sup>

Last summer at Columbia University I attended a course of lectures, given by Professor Henderson, on Principles of Education. In connection with the course the professor required that each student should choose a subject for special investigation. It occurred to me, as a teacher of Latin, that it would be interesting and profitable to make a study of methods of teaching Latin and of the general principles on which they are based, and so to work out a creed for myself. The essay which embodied the results of that investigation, founded on such books as Horne's Philosophy of Education, Bagley's The Educative Process, Thorndike's Principles of Teaching, and the McMurry books, Elements of General Method and Method of the Recitation, I have been requested to read before this Association. This is my apology for the fact that I come before you with a paper which is simply a statement of the faith that is in us all.

"Given these children to be changed and this change to be made, how shall I proceed?" is Thorndike's statement of the teacher's problem. Let us consider the answer from the point of view of the teacher of Latin. What is the desirable change? Is Latin an effective instrument? To maintain a place in the modern curriculum, since the passing of the dogma of formal discipline, Latin must prove itself capable of furthering the aim of modern education. The prevailing conception of that aim is Herbart's—the development of moral character. But "morality means the control of impulse with reference to a social end", says Bagley, who restates the Herbartian aim thus "The development of the socially efficient individual is the ultimate end of education". Now the socially efficient individual is the product of an education which, by the use of chosen materials, subjects of the curriculum, has consciously developed in him certain ideals of conduct and has taught them to function in specific habits. Since useful materials may develop ideals as well as useless ones, a subject may claim its place in a modern course of study only by proving itself intrinsically valuable and capable of developing ideals of right conduct. Can Latin prove its claim to both characteristics?

The content of Latin is intrinsically valuable both in its technique and in its literature. The proof of the former rests on three results of its study, the development of language sense, of facility in the use of English, and of accurate comprehension of the

meaning of English words. First, with the acquisition of the mother tongue the child gains an unconscious language instinct, but a language sense comes only with the painstaking logical effort necessary to comprehend distinctions in a tongue whose structure and means of expressing relations are so different from the modern analytic language. Says De Garmo, "This makes grammatical study a concrete sort of introspection, the vestibule to psychology and logic. The student begins to think about his thinking". The educated man thinks clearly, commands the exact means of expression and adequately appreciates the fine and noble in the thought of others. If training in language analysis as distinct from instinctive acquisition did not make this difference, then, as Bennett says, "the polyglot couriers of Europe ought to be the most highly cultivated persons of contemporary society". Secondly, facility in the use of English comes with proper training in translation. The teacher should uniformly insist on accurate, idiomatic and literary English. The pupil gains by this drill an appreciation and command of the resources of his own language. Thirdly, English words gain a deeper and fuller meaning for those who see in them the Latin original. Who that knows *splendo* will misuse 'splendid'? Or, seeing therein *cum sidere*, will fail to rejoice in the poetic 'consider'? These results for English are true for other languages as well. The student of Latin is prepared to acquire with comparative ease the modern languages. He needs drill for no end save that of practical use. He will learn in three years along with Latin as much German as he would learn in four without it. Together with this 'preparatory' value of Latin goes its 'theoretic' value, the unification of language knowledge which must otherwise be fragmentary.

Is the content of Latin literature intrinsically valuable? Since translations bring to the student whatever of history, political and social institutions and antiquities Latin literature contains, its claim rests on the fact that only through its literature can one reach the inner spirit of a people, its aspirations, ideals, literary forms. "One has as many souls as one understands languages". To enter into the civilization of a people through its language is to get a view of world relations and to broaden one's spirit. Especially is this true of the Romans, whose civilization is the parent of the modern world.

Is Latin capable of developing ideals of right conduct? While men have lost faith in the general disciplinary value of any course of study, it is agreed that ideals of conduct may be developed consciously by the teacher. Education must create noble desires, high interests and a strong and moral will. Let the teacher give to his pupils noble examples, rouse interest in them and appeal to the feelings which influence the will in the right way. But he must not stop here. Ideals must find practical application.

<sup>1</sup> This paper was read at the second annual meeting of the Classical Association of the Atlantic States, at Washington, D. C., Friday, April 24, 1908.